

the other saying he wouldn't. I am sure that Jack McCann had no consciously ulterior motive when he accepted Harkins' invitation to see a little circus life. About unconsciously ulterior motives I know nothing.

NOR did I tumble to the drift of the thing when I received a telegram two or three towns beyond:

Don't doubt you understand publicity game; but Spanish girl Jacinta Alhamar is best bet in Mighty Harkins Show. Rest compare with her way E. Tanguay compares with D. Sarah. Star that glitters most not glitter. Girl in yellow is entire heavenly constellation. Get busy. Am sending flock of new photos.

The pictures arrived, and were excellent for newspapers. To carry them I framed up a story about the exquisite young Spaniard having left her native town—Seville, on the banks of the historic Guadalquivir—because of the unwelcome attentions of one José Talavera, a bull fighter, had fled to South America where, over the wind-blown plains of Patagonia, she had ridden thousands of leagues on the backs of the fleetest horses that grow—the half-wild natives of the pampas. There she had first essayed the most difficult feat of equestrianism ever attempted by a member of the weaker sex—the Roman standing race.

The Mighty Harkins had heard how, in Buenos Aires, she had caused the Argentine President to throw his hat into the air and lead thirty thousand spectators in queer Spanish yells of delight when she came tearing past the finish line ahead of the best horsemen in the Republic. The Mighty Harkins, after a deal of trouble and great expense, had succeeded in obtaining this young lady's signature to a contract by which she would tour the United States for one consecutive season under his direction, after which the royal commands of Alfonso XIII., Czar Nicholas, King George V., Wilhelm II., Franz Joseph, Haakon of Norway, and the Khedive would make an extended tour of the European and North African capitals imperative. Meantime the Señorita Jacinta Alhamar, champion Roman standing rider of the world, stood ready to ride Bolivar and Dolivar, her justly celebrated and deservedly famous blacks, in rings around any man or

laugh your head off. And he's crazy to have a challenge race pulled off. Offers to put up the stake and make a big side bet that she can beat the world.

Such a race would possess tremendous publicity values; for it could be run on someone of the neighboring fair grounds on which the circus generally played. But unless we faked it there seemed no possible way of doing the stunt. Besides Miss Grogan there was only one experienced standing rider in the show, the blond girl mentioned several paragraphs back. A race between them would never do. Cavalrymen and circus performers are about the only folk nowadays who become proficient riders of galloping teams, and so, unless I could dig up an itinerant cavalryman, the race idea looked mighty dubious. That it turned out to be one of the knockout press-agent stunts of history was due to luck—pure, unadulterated, name-blown-in-the-bottle luck.

WEDNESDAY morning I landed in Kansas City and dropped into "The Star" office to say howdy to some friends. Half an hour later, standing on the steps to light a cigarette before I went around to the hotel to meet Sam and Jack, I heard my name spoken in dulcet tones, looked up, and discovered Dorothy McCann, Jack's younger sister, sitting in the tonneau of a big machine. I had not seen her since the evening of the day of the Pomeranian Riot. She had come West to be bridesmaid at the wedding of a schoolgirl chum.

"Seen Jack?" I asked.

"My brother Jack! Hasn't he returned to New York yet?"

I climbed in beside her and related the glad tidings, while the chauffeur purred the car through the residential streets. I told her how John Henry McCann, Jr., the most sought young millionaire on Fifth-ave., had gone daffy over a brown-haired Irish girl who rode a standing race in a circus. I went into the details of her immediate ancestry. Her father, Michael Grogan, was head animal man of the Mighty Harkins Show, and had the reputation of having been the hardest hitting and hardest drinking kangaroo trainer in the business. I dwelt on Jack's sudden interest in the study of Spanish,

Grogan or whatever's her name can ride a team of worn-out circus beasts, then she deserves to lose Jack as a bachelor brother. Tom, will you help me? I helped you in that Pomeranian affair. Say yes, and we'll teach that darling brother of mine a new trick! Come on! It'll be great fun!"

This younger sister of Jack's was the gamiest little thing you ever saw,—could ride, swim, sail, dance, and look better than any other girl in the land, and had a way of persuading a man that was little short of uncanny. Her sense of humor was so clean cut, colossal, and harmless, her enthusiasm was so infectious, and her smile was so frank and winning, that she always gained her point. I agreed to be a fellow conspirator in the plot to put dents in the heart and pocketbook of my good friend McCann; but not until Miss Dorothy had demonstrated to Sam and me that she could ride two horses simultaneously and safely. Then we started to work, and worked fast.

THE father of the girl whose wedding Miss Dorothy had come West to attend was a horse fancier of international fame, and on a big farm just outside of the city had a stable filled with carefully bred equines. We—Miss McCann and I—unfolded the plot to him, and received a decidedly chilly response when it came to the question of using a pair of his nags to bring about the amatory awakening of young John Henry. "It was too dangerous to think of," he said. The notoriety such a stunt would cause would make his daughter's initiation into the marital state about as solemn as a hooshy coochy show.

We had quite a time explaining that nobody would ever know the identity of the fair equestrienne, that the contest would not take place until after his beloved child had shaken the dust of Kansas City off her tiny boots and all the uncooked rice out of her hair. And then he too had to be convinced that little Miss McCann could ride.

On his country place he had a half-mile exercising track, and that very evening the old gentleman, Harkins, and I had the pleasure of watching Miss Dorothy guide a pair of powerful bays round the oval at a slashing canter. She had ridden ever since she was old enough to walk, and I honestly believe she was the peer of any man I ever saw on a horse—barring, of course, acrobatic riders. Fearless, graceful, and experienced, there wasn't a doubt of her ability. The old man gave in when he had watched her awhile and had received Sam's assurance that there was little danger attached to a standing race on a comfortable track. We promised him complete lack of notoriety. He agreed.

The hymeneal roughhouse was to take place the last day of our stay in the city; so we decided to pull off the affair in the second town out. The burg selected was a sizable place,—had a population of twenty thousand or thereabouts,—and was only two hours' ride from Kansas City; near enough to attract newspaper correspondents and to permit immediate and valuable publicity being planted in the public prints within a radius of several hundred miles. I started the ball rolling by placing a challenge in all the Kansas City papers, and in doing out the ad enjoyed the enthusiastic assistance of my poor misguided friend Jack. He even went around with me when I handed in the copy; although I feared audibly that he was wasting time that might have been spent more profitably studying Spanish.

"Nix on the kidding stuff," was his comeback. "If this pronunciamento (you notice he was getting quite easy with the Española already) 'only raises a reply, you'll see what the little Alhamar lady can do.'"

I agreed with him for more reasons than one. The challenge simply said that Señorita Jacinta Alhamar, late of Spain and Argentina, and Now a Featured Attraction with the Mighty Harkins Circus, was the undisputed Lady Roman Standing Expert of the Known World, and was Ready and Willing to Defend her Title Against Anybody, Male or Female, Who Dared Contest her Claim and Could Back His or Her Opinion with One Thousand American Dollars.

Next day both the evening papers ran interviews with Harkins and Miss Grogan, printed new pictures of both, and stirred up enough excitement to pack a big top until the quarter-poles creaked.

ON the following morning under scare headlines there appeared the news that an unknown young woman, who for personal reasons wished to hide her identity, had communicated with Samuel Harkins by letter accepting the gauntlet thrown down by the fair Spaniard, and stating that she would take pleasure in competing with the señorita in a Roman standing race to be run Tuesday morning on the half-mile track of the fair grounds at the aforementioned town, where the circus was billed for two performances on that date; said race to be once around the track. In closing the unknown stated that, to prove her sportswomanship, she had placed a thousand dollars in cash in the custody of Mr. Blank. This man, the father of the bride, was one of the best known and most respected citizens in the whole Middle West. His name stood for integrity and meant business. The letter was signed "Miss New York." Its publication

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Sam and four canvasmen came in, carrying the limp form of Miss Florence McGuire.

woman who dared contest her claim and make a side bet of a thousand dollars.

The story landed easily, and so did the pictures. Inside a week the girl was the talk of the country through which we were playing. This I learned from communications received from Sam and McCann. A letter from the former contained an interesting paragraph:

My hat off to you, Tom, for the publicity you are handing the Grogan girl. She's the hit of the show now. Great applause when she first appears. Cheers when she finishes. Jack is dippy over her, and doesn't know she's Grogan's daughter. I gave her the high sign, and she pretends to know no English. So Jack has bought a trunkful of Spanish dictionaries, grammars, and readers, and is working overtime to establish a means of communicating his thoughts to the young lady's pink ear. You should see him trying to talk to her in a language she wots nothing of! You'd

and drew a word picture of his general appearance when he should learn that the beautiful Señorita Alhamar could neither speak nor understand the language of Cervantes. When I showed her Sam's letter she laughed so hard that she cried.

"But what is this Roman standing race in which my future sister in law displays her—talents?" she giggled, and dried her eyes.

"Two horses galloping side by side. No saddles and no harness excepting bridles and reins. Lady driver stands with one foot on back of each steed clad in—"

"Never mind the costume! So that's your old Roman standing race, is it? And my brother thinks this Irish Spaniard is the real champion? Why, I rode that way before I was eleven, and if a McCann can't handle a pair of regular horses faster than a Hogan or Logan or